

# The Midwife.

## THE PROBLEM OF THE FUTURE.

We referred briefly last week to a collection of lectures published, under the title of "Motherhood," by the National League for Physical Education and Improvement. The first of these by Dr. C. W. Saleeby, F.R.S. Edin., on "The Problem of the Future," is specially interesting at the present time.

Dr. Saleeby lays down as a eugenic proposition that those who are best qualified to survive become the parents of the next generation, who inherit those very attributes in virtue of which their parents survived, and that the survival of the fittest involves the extinction of the less fit. Again, that every biologist knows that the extinction of the unfit, which is part of the process of natural selection, occurs mostly among the young, and particularly the very young of any species. From this it may be argued that our high rate of infant mortality is this process of extinction working itself out among ourselves and is in itself beneficent. Indeed, that certain authorities have stated that those who stand for infant care are preparing for the degeneration of the race because they have not the courage to face the stern necessities of the laws of life.

"But," continues Dr. Saleeby, "the process of infant destruction is a hideous counterfeit of natural selection. Natural selection either slays or *saves*, but this process is one which slays and *spoils*, damaging many of those which survive. Many of the processes which cause infant mortality, such as the slum and the public-house, are not natural but hideously unnatural. It is pure Nietzschean mis-representation of Darwin, based on the exaltation of strength at the expense of and in ignorance of the necessary part played by love and the care of the helpless in the survival of our race.

"A large factor in the struggle for life is the numerical factor. Surgeon-Major Woodruff, formerly of the United States Army, in his 'Expansion of Races' says that wars are really due to population pressure of nations upon others less populous than themselves. This is a law of population pressure which determines a great deal of history. The sheer numbers of any race are of very considerable importance for its survival. . . .

"Great Britain has an immense Empire, many parts of which are most sparsely populated, and it is contrary to nature that this should be. To take care of the life we have here at home is the most profound piece of statesmanship that can be enunciated at the present time. . . . The best thing to do under the circumstances is to take care of all the babies we have and also to care for all mothers that are and all healthy mothers that may be.

"At the time of the Boer War and afterwards we found that it was the men that mattered. Men with long-lost teeth, or suffering from the consequences of rickets, were of no use to us. The late Sir Frederick Maurice called public attention to the condition of affairs, and a Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration was appointed, after a Royal Commission had sat in Scotland on Physical Training. But no amount of physical training could bring back those lost teeth. The children's health must be safeguarded while the teeth are yet there. Then we went further back, and considered the case of the school-child.

"Dr. Leslie Mackenzie, now Medical Member of the Local Government Board for Scotland, went into the schools and found deplorable conditions existing there. It was then realized that children came to school already damaged in health, so more attention was directed to the infant; and gradually, as taught by France and Belgium, to the expectant mother. The whole thing is the history of a military problem. Men were wanted. By slow stages, Parliament, the public and the Press are being brought to realize that life is continuous, that every second of life matters, that all the needs and consequences of life are continuous. We cannot get soldiers or men ready made. We must go back to infancy and motherhood."

Twenty years ago the late Professor Budin, of Paris, began his campaign for the welfare of infancy from a national point of view. Since the fall in the birth-rate could not be arrested by any practicable process, he saw that there was only one possible resource available—to take care of the births there were. Unduly high infant mortality and a low birth-rate were at the root of the military expedient of making recruits serve for three years instead of two.

"France began at an earlier point than we, with our toothless recruits; it began with the infant under one year of age. But France also learnt that by going further backwards, one can go forwards, and accordingly instituted a system, not only of feeding babies with suitable prepared milk, proceeding subsequently to feed the baby through the mother, by feeding her; but, last and best of all, the expectant mother was fed as well, and mothers generally were educated in the care of their babies. This was first done by Dr. Miele, of Ghent, in 1901; and from the first School for Mothers of his have sprung the 1,000 that now exist in France, 400 in Britain, and 77 in Belgium."

Dr. Saleeby then discusses in a most interesting way the difference between the knowledge of the human mother and that of animals and even insects. Untaught, the knowledge of the human mother is inferior to both, for even many insects

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